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BUSONI

By JEAN CHANTAVOINE

IF Ferruccio Busoni were in every sense of the word merely an incomparable pianist he would more than merit being spoken of as exhaustively as I propose to do. What has not been written of the pianistic prowess of Chopin, Liszt, Rubinstein, or Planté? Then how much more may be said in praise of Busoni's marvelous virtuosity, of the dazzling effect of his playing, unequalled because it resembles nothing we have ever heard before, of the infinite subtlety of touch, of the indescribable nuances, of the lightness, force, grace, daring, and above all, of the poetry which emanates and radiates from the piano! It is supreme mastery; but how is it possible to express the magic of this negation of matter by the spirit? He brings voices out of the instrument which no one else has ever brought out—heavy thunder, unearthly sighs, the soughing notes of the organ, the blare of trumpets, pearly flute-like notes, the caressing tones of a violin! At first his prodigious technic seems to overwhelm everything else, as he overcomes the greatest difficulties with consummate ease and apparently without realizing that they are there; however, one quickly loses all thought of technic. I repeat that Busoni is incomparable. If a comparison were possible, I would say he has surpassed Rosenthal. For example, the "Etudes d'après Paganini" or the "Etudes d'Exécution Transcendante" of Liszt become more brilliant, more scintillating, under his fingers, than it is possible to imagine; they seem easy, because their soaring flight cannot be measured. As to the manifold relief which Busoni gives to the polyphony of Bach, particularly remarkable in his magnificent transcriptions of the organ works for the piano, he holds the key to a secret unknown to his predecessors. A good judge who heard him for the first time at the Salle Erard in 1914 said: "Even Liszt did not play as well."

Such a degree, even more, such quality of virtuosity, wholly without trace of effort, or of mechanism, suppose and reveal in themselves the necessary gifts for such a magician. In listening to Ferruccio Busoni, one is inevitably drawn to the conclusion—no matter what tenacity he may have shown in the acquisition of his art—that he was born with what so many others strive to obtain by right of conquest. The phenomenal agility

of his fingers, his supple wrists of steel, would be nothing, if they were not inspired by a brain of extraordinary power and delicacy. If we follow the interpreter's flight, this certainty is soon confirmed and, while forgetting our astonishment and freed from the dominating idea of technic, amazing revelations follow in which the intuitive glance plumbs to the depths of genius, resuscitating Bach—becoming, as it were, his “double”—Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt. Many more surprises are in store, which while combatting them, and even if they do not quite convince, compel attention. This contact of Busoni with the great masters is often “une rencontre parfaite,” as perfect as the *quinte juste*, satisfying as the solution of a riddle, or the cypher of a cryptogram. Sometimes it is a dialogue, which is apparently in perfect accord; but it is infallibly the encounter of genius with genius. It would also be impossible for a physiognomist to be deceived. It is sufficient to shake his hand—the most beautiful that a sculptor ever imagined, a hand so robust and of appearance so frail—to discover in it an instrument rarer than the most perfect Stradivarius. It is enough to look at the noble and mobile face, the lofty brow, the decided eyes, the fine and sensitive nose, and the delicately chiselled lips, to grasp the fact that an exceptional being stands before us.

I shall try to justify these impressions which the least initiated listener will feel in regard to his playing as well as in regard to his personality, which is not only that of a pianist without an equal, but of an artist of rare persuasiveness and powerful originality, and who is as well one of the most representative artists of his time.

* * *

Ferruccio Busoni was born at Empoli, in Tuscany, April 1st, 1866¹, of an Italian father and of a mother whose origin on the paternal side was German; both were musicians. The father was a clarinet virtuoso and the mother an excellent pianist, and it was she who gave him his first musical instruction.

At four years of age, he could already play on the piano any melodies which had been played for him. When eight years

¹In reference to Mr. Busoni, consult: H. Leichtentritt, “F. Busoni” (Breitkopf & Härtel); Lazare Ponnelle, “At Munich” (Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Ferruccio Busoni), Paris, Fischbacher, and Mr. Busoni’s own work, “A New Esthetic of Music” and many others. The magazine articles are too numerous to mention. (Unquestionably that by H. Leichtentritt in the *Musical Quarterly*, is one of the best and most comprehensive. I am under the impression that it coincides with the same author’s German pamphlet mentioned above.—Ed.)

old, he began to compose. His public début as a pianist also dates from this period, when the severe Viennese critic Edward Hanslick wrote a long and eulogistic article about him. Two years later, while at Graz, where he was studying, he directed a "Stabat Mater" of his own. When fifteen, on returning to Italy, the Royal Academy of Bologna opened its doors to him—as formerly to Mozart—with a charming speech, a fragment of which, as given to us by Mr. Ponnelle, follows:

Remember, young artist, that in this hall in which you have enthralled a distinguished audience . . . at a tender age the immortal Mozart presented his thesis and took the same degree in this Academy which you have now taken; may that serve to stimulate and strengthen you to persevere in a career which will lead you to fame.

As a reply to this encouragement, he wrote a cantata, "Il Sabbato del Villaggio," developed after Leopardi. But these youthful honours could not persuade a young artist of his stamp, anxious for the highest attainment, to remain in Italy. He went first to Vienna, then to Leipzig, working equally hard at composition and virtuosity. His first concerts took place in Berlin in 1885, when he appeared both as pianist and composer, his "Variations sur un Prélude de Chopin" being on the programme: at first, however, he attracted little notice. Busoni only conquered the German capital little by little. I can also remember the empty places in the Salle Erard before the triumphal concerts of 1914 took place, when the notices read long in advance "All seats sold." A slow conquest, wherein lies the symbol of the artist's destiny, the artist who has a horror of réclame and to whom progress is law.

During his stay in Leipzig, he came in contact with such artists as Delius, Mahler, Tschaikowsky, and Grieg. He wrote his first string quartet and began with the Fugue in D major, the astonishing series of transcriptions of the organ works of J. S. Bach for the piano, which opened out a horizon until then unknown for this instrument, even to Liszt. As is well known, Leipzig at that time furnished music masters to the greater part of the world, and Busoni was called as professor to the Conservatory of Helsingfors. His sojourn in these northern countries, his marriage to a young Swedish lady in 1890, at Moscow, took him from his own country, but enriched his mind and feeling by adding new elements. Possibly these great countries, sparsely peopled, influenced him in proportion to their immensity.

It was at this period (1890), when the Rubinstein prize was awarded him, that his name first became universally known. In

Russia, he was brought in contact with Rimsky-Korsakow, Sazonov, and Glazounov. After a short exercise of his duties at the conservatory at Moscow, he was called to the New World, to be professor at the New England Conservatory at Boston 1891-1892, a position he soon relinquished in order to make a tour of the United States. He then went into voluntary retirement, in order to change completely his manner of playing. "It was at this period of my life," he writes, "that I became aware of such lacunae and of such faults in my playing that by an energetic resolve, I again took up the study of the piano from the beginning and upon an entirely new basis. Liszt's works were my guide." It was the retreat of Zarathoustra, and the pianist was not the only one to gain.

It was in Berlin, in 1894, that Busoni next established himself. Without wishing to be unjust, the situation Berlin offered to such a pianist cannot be compared with that which he would have had in London, or in Paris. The alarm sounded by Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, in 1886, in the preface of his "*Roman Russe*" should be born in mind, in order to acknowledge that the anxiety felt by this noble spirit at the failing influence of French thought on the thought of the world, would not have been less justified in 1890 in regard to music, any more than in regard to literature or philosophy. Paris in 1830 made a home for Chopin. Would Paris of 1890 have done so? In Berlin, Busoni did not confine himself to the piano and composition; he directed symphonic concerts of modern tendencies, where—it may be said—French art had a large share.¹ He always maintained complete independence and never made even the slightest concession to the highest official circles.² He varied his sojourn by tours and by seasons at Weimar, Bâle, and Vienna, where he endeavored to create centres of artistic instruction analogous to those which had been formed around Liszt at Weimar. In 1912, his first opera "*Die Brautwahl*" was played at Hamburg; it was but little understood by the public.

In reality Busoni cared so little about Germany that, in 1913, he accepted with joy the direction of the Liceo Musicale of Bologna, which Academy, it will be remembered, received him as it had the young Mozart. This position was not of long duration,

¹Guy-Ropartz, "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*"; Saint-Saëns, "*Ouverture des Barbares*"; d'Indy, prelude of the second act of "*L'Etranger*" and "*Suite française*"; Debussy, "*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*," and "*Nocturnes*"; Magnard, 3rd Symphony; César Franck, "*Les Djinns*," "*Le Chasseur maudit*," "*Prélude*," "*Chorale et fugue*," (orchestrated by G. Pierné).

²Mr. Busoni's only decoration apparently is the Legion of Honor.

however; a secondary Italian city did not offer a large or rich enough field for the talents and mind of Busoni. Then followed the great war, for which the artist felt an indescribable horror, even before his own country had entered into the struggle. He did not place himself "au-dessus de la mêlée," he merely submitted to it and lived in Zurich, where circumstances imposed upon him a certain quietude like that in which, twenty years before, he had taken up the study of the piano again from the beginning—a quietude studious, profound—and even though the terms may seem contradictory—an active quietude. He assumed direction of the "Concerts d'abonnement," which he made eminently artistic and educational. He turned the "musique de scène" for the "Turandot" of Gozzi into a lyric drama, wrote "Arlechino," a theatrical caprice in one act, and continued with the composition of "Doctor Faustus," as well as a "Sonatina" for Christmas 1917, etc.¹ His recent return to Paris was preceded by a triumphal tour in England, where not only the virtuoso was acclaimed, but where his compositions, though they met here and there with strong opposition, excited the attention of the most noteworthy critics, among them Edward J. Dent.²

From now on it is plainly to be seen that Ferruccio Busoni is not merely a marvelous virtuoso; in his art he is both philosopher and composer. Thus his career and his destiny offer more than one analogy with those of Liszt—with both of them the renown of the pianist preceded that of the composer, and far from being favorable to it, more or less obscured it. Equally bound to the works of the past and seeking to discover in them the roots of modern progress, for art a new horizon and unknown formulas, both are careful on its account to plant some new sign-posts upon the road of the future, both possessed of the curiosity of a world-wide intelligence, and armed for the conquest of ideas by the mastery of several languages, much world travel, and by long visits in nearly every civilized country. It is very probable that Busoni's temporary retirement from the concert-stage in his twenty-seventh year, when he sought to find the secrets of the pianoforte in the works of Liszt, has made this relationship more remarkable. But the resemblance, as will be seen, remains entirely extraneous, and I have brought it forward only to dissipate in advance any misunderstanding which might arise here from the superficial examination of entirely outward circumstances.

¹See H. S. Salzberger, "Ferruccio Busoni" (in French) in the "Hunis-Musik-Jahrbuch."

²"Busoni and the Pianoforte" and "Busoni as Composer" by E. J. Dent in the "The Atheneum" of October 34th and November 28th, 1919.

In studying Busoni's extremely rich and complex personality, the connection, so to speak, between the composer and the pianist is to be found in the little book he published under the title of "Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst."¹ It may be said that in this little book he has shown what are his theories, if no mind were not so free of theories as his, and no mind a greater stranger to all didactic prepossessions. This tiny book is a collection of aphorisms, where the want of a constructive dialectic does not exclude unity and grandeur of thought. I know nothing richer in literature for those who care to reflect upon the nature and meaning of music and upon the extent of its domain than this species of intellectual rhapsody. From the beginning Busoni does not disguise that the musical problem, such as he presents it, is not solvable, and in any case, the span of human life does not suffice in which to find the solution of the problem. Because, if music, more than any of the other arts, is of an immaterial essence, even more so than poetry, for words are rooted in reality, is it not on that account all the more impossible to grasp? Representation or description are not his affair, and Busoni keeps programme music apart from his ideal—here he separates himself from Liszt—to uphold absolute music. But here he meets with a contradiction and denounces it. Usage gives the name of pure or absolute music to formal music, whose forms are in reality an alteration of this purity, a negation of the absolute, a restriction of liberty. For Busoni it is a contradiction to exact from a composer liberty in all things except in form. These forms are at bottom a prejudice of taste, and taste is, according to Busoni, a limitation of feeling by the intelligence, a restraint upon the senses and it is taste which from music (*Musik*) has made the art of music (*Tonkunst*).²

In short, absolute, or pure music must be free. Far from its being necessary for no matter what musical motive to enter, cost what it may, into a predetermined form, every motive, as does the seed, contains within itself the principle and the rhythm of its development:

From the different plant-seeds grow different families of plants, dissimilar in form, foliage, blossom, fruit, growth, and colour. Each individual plant belonging to one and the same species assumes in size, form, and strength a growth peculiar to itself. So in each motive there lies the embryo of its fully developed form.

¹English version, under the title of "A New Esthetic of Music, published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

²"Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst, *passim*."

Thus Busoni wishes to liberate music from all material as well as intellectual ties, even at the theatre (since it is superfluous and contradictory to exact from sound the description of what one sees upon the stage). Musical writing itself is servitude, and in this his views touch those of Vincent d'Indy. Notation should be considered merely as a symbol:

Every notation is in itself the transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it, the idea loses its original form¹.

He goes almost so far as to say that there is no fixed text, that the sense varies from age to age, and that each generation has the right to adapt the sense to its own thought rather than be subservient to this or that one. "The letter kills, the spirit revives." The application of this principle to musical art is very daring, perhaps dangerous: but it explains on Busoni's part, the freedom of his transcriptions, as well as that which at times he does not hesitate to give to his interpretations.

The instruments, no less than the writing and notation, are an impediment to the free development of music:

The instruments are limited by their range, their timbre, the possibilities of execution, while their hundred chains bind the will of the creative artist.

Nor is it on all these material conditions that our tonal system depends, and after that our traditions of harmony:

These are still 'signs' and nothing else than what we to-day call the tonal system, an ingenious device to grasp somewhat of the eternal harmony; a meagre pocket edition of this encyclopaedic work; artificial light instead of the sun. Have you ever noticed how people gaze open-mouthed at the brilliant lighting of a hall? They never do so at the million-fold brighter sunshine of noonday.

According to him, all our tonalities come back to the two modes, major and minor; still further, he only sees in the second a "corruption" of the former (in which he is in accord with Maurice Emmanuel). Oh! Poor and mediocre "temperament" which has the restricted range of twenty-four scales! In the space of an octave, Busoni counts one hundred and thirteen possible scales. According to him, everything announces a near revolution in harmony. Tones and half tones do not suffice. Thirds of tones are wholly independent intervals of a pronounced character and not to be confounded with ill-tuned semitones. As one sees, it is not only musical form which is of concern to Busoni, but the matter itself. One is forced to think of the change which

¹"Entwurf," etc., p. 19. The greatest freedom of music lies for him in the pause or the organ point. (p. 36).

the discovery of radioactivity, for example, has made in the conception of physical matter, which did not seem less firmly implanted in our minds than the temperament of the scales.

Busoni closes this hymn to the total and essential liberty of music by the appeal of Nietzsche for music liberated from all northern influence, German, European, for a music of the "Sun." He finds the description of his ideal in a phrase where Tolstoi, depicting a landscape on the borders of Lake Lucerne, rejoices to find "Neither in the lake, nor on the mountains, nor in the sky, a single straight line, a single unmixed color, a single point of repose; everywhere movement, irregularity, caprice, variety, an incessant interplay of shades and lines, and in it all the reposefulness, softness, harmony, and inevitableness of Beauty."

Must I say that these aphorisms of Ferruccio Busoni do not appear to me to be quite free from objections? I do not wish to traduce him by seeming to wish to hold him to the letter in his condemnation of programme music as well as of formal music. The living force which he makes of a creative tradition, renewing the works of the past from epoch to epoch, suffices to assure us that he does not disclaim any connection in the history of the arts. Programme music is, however, not wholly puerile, nor is all form in music pedantic. The first takes into account and makes use of all obscure connections, uncertain, slender, but manifest that nature has established between our different senses; she counts upon music to multiply or to determine these connections—is it to misdirect or to change them? Form in music, without doing violence to music, or to musical susceptibilities, endeavors to find a certain organic relation with the different qualities of the mind. I see there neither restriction nor limitation, but an effort to have music penetrate further into the intellectual life. From one end to the other, however, musical art is trying to find, in order to communicate the impressions of which it is the interpreter, a common ground to be compared to that which gives to the poet the use of language, to the sculptor the materialization of form, to the painter the reality of lines and colours. As this ground is by its nature very unstable, is it not more advantageous to consolidate it rather than to change it? I do not dare decide. Even the comparison which Busoni forms from the example of vegetable nature to claim in favour of the musical germ, which is the "motive" or "theme," a specific and individual liberty of development, equal to that of the seed, is perhaps more seductive than convincing. First, because science restrains these forms of development to a fairly restricted number of types where the

characteristics of family or of the individual have little place; lastly, because nature does not always bear fruit or multiply the different kinds, except through artificial cutting, grafting, and calculated selection.

One easily understands that this cult for the exuberance of nature and this faith in its spontaneity, animates an artist like Busoni; the difficulties, the materiality of the piano do not exist for him. He destroys them, suppresses them, volatilizes them. So quite naturally, he imagines music to be as obedient to the inspiration of the musician as the piano is to his fingers, and saturated as he is with science and civilization, he fears that this science and this civilization will throw us into a complete forgetfulness of life. This overthrow of "naturalism" is not unexampled, either in music or the other arts. It was after the slavish employment of geometric gardens *à la française* that we are taken by the beauty of the English parks, and we now see that the Americans, the people most given over to inveigling, domesticating, and enslaving scientifically and industrially the forces of nature, imagine that Paradise has been found again in the fantastic Yellowstone Park.

* * *

I have said that the "New Esthetic of Music" would serve as a connecting link between pianist and composer. The works of the latter are considerable and extend in all directions. It would require a special study and a technical one to understand these transcriptions, notably those of the organ works of Bach, which are marvels of richness and invention. Let us, therefore, consider only his original compositions. Busoni has written for the theatre: "Die Brautwahl," "Arlecchino," and "Turandot;" for orchestra, "Poème Symphonique," "Suites," "Berceuse Élégiaque," "Nocturne Symphonique," etc; for piano and orchestra, a Concerto with chorus and the "Fantasie Indienne;" for violin with orchestra or piano, one concerto and two sonatas; two string quartets; and lastly, a number of piano works¹. Recently, two programmes of these works gave to the Parisian public merely an idea of their scope into which I shall not undertake to go definitely as I must confine myself to indications of a more vague and summary nature.

Is something of the executant to be found in the works of the composer? It does not seem doubtful to me. Not that Busoni's music is in the slightest degree the music of a "pianist."

¹The catalogue of his works is in the op. cit. of H. Leichtentritt.

Those who have heard or read the Concerto, Op. 39 will realize that there is little resemblance between it and a concerto by Rubinstein. In Busoni's original works for the piano, or those in which the piano takes part, the boldness and ingenuity of the arrangements, as well as the many discoveries in sonority, recall and explain the author's mastery of the instrument. But far from supplementing or overweighing the music, they serve merely as a means. However, this is a small matter; in his compositions, as in his "Esthetic," Busoni is only a pianist in the measure that his virtuosity has obtained complete independence for him.

It is more especially in the aphorisms of his essay that the key is to be found to his musical works, which at first seem either strange or mysterious. Busoni is too sincere an artist, too great and too disdainful of immediate success, still more of an easy victory, for the character of his musical work not to correspond with his ideas upon art, and of which they are the outcome. These works are most daring and very moving, a statement which it is rather difficult to define. In his enthusiasm for research and invention, Busoni the composer is aided, as is Busoni the virtuoso, by a prodigious facility, by an exceptional gift of assimilation, and by a no less remarkable technic. In this respect his "Fantasia Contrapuntistica" for the piano, on the themes of Bach, and notably upon the unfinished "Kunst der Fuge," is for breadth of construction and richness of detail, a monument second to none in musical literature. In certain youthful works, such as the "Variations sur un Prélude de Chopin," academic influences are felt, which owe something to those of Brahms on a theme by Handel. This only means that in music Busoni knows all and can do all. He is able to dispense with new proofs at every turn and is free to obey his own fantasy.

This last is many sided, changing, capricious, if you will. With him, artistic creation is a perpetual quest; none of his works are cast in the same mold, nor have they any resemblance to one another; presumably, he has a horror of fixing any formula in order to exploit it afterwards. No sooner had he finished the "caprice théâtral" of the ironical and fantastic "Arleccino" than he turned to work on "Doctor Faustus," changing from Italian "malice" to the profundity, the "Gründlichkeit," of Germany. The somewhat unusual esoteric character of the humor of "Die Brautwahl" seems to have confused the public; "Turandot" follows next and seeks for effects through an esoteric atmosphere rather than through colour. Grandeur, intelligence, verve, reflection, vigor, nonchalance, wit, gravity, action, and meditation

follow each other according to a fancy in which the critics of the future will have some difficulty in finding a line to follow, in order to show a predetermined evolution.

It often happens that these diverse tendencies, not content with appearing here and there, meet in one and the same work. For example, nothing is more dissimilar than the "Fantasie Indienne" for piano and orchestra from the Concerto, op. 39. But even in the latter concerto, where the total development attains a majestic breadth, how many different phases, how many different nuances, from the most thoughtful melancholy to the most overflowing exuberance! A sort of tarantella goes through it, and it is brought to its conclusion sustained by a chorus singing of Nirvana from the verses of Oehlenschlaeger. It cannot be doubted that a man who foresees and who predicts and who wishes to substitute for the twenty-four scales of our temperament one hundred and thirteen scales, semitones and tripartite tones, would not draw back from any boldness in writing, provided that, above all, his harmonies should be rich and sonorous.

It goes without saying, also, that this mobility of ideas attempts an always variable realization, which makes these works hardly accessible to the public and little fitted for an immediate success. Experience opposes them, in a certain way, with the same objections that can be brought against his "New Esthetic of Music." The public wants to know what it is listening to; and to be understood an artist must repeat himself. I do not believe, however, that Busoni would ever make this concession. If I may be permitted to refer to private letters, I find that he pictures artistic activity as a film. But this ephemeral fluidity of forms, disappearing as soon as outlined, makes them rather difficult to grasp. The public, even the most enlightened, is wrong in withholding recognition from an artist, until he has made a specialty and created a formula which they will be certain to find again later on; perhaps genius implies, in a certain measure, that sort of fixity which is desired by those to whom it appeals. Does Busoni always submit to what the conditions of artistic life ask of him? I am unable to answer, for there is too great nobility in his ardor and in his independence to attach blame to him for a fault as though it were a weakness.

* * *

The other day, as, pencil in hand, I was reading Busoni's essay, I instinctively wrote down the name of Euphorion,

imaginary son of Faust and Helen, in regard to a phrase where the author, citing the youthfulness of music, compares it with a child who cannot walk, but floats: "It touches not the earth with its feet. It knows no law of gravitation. It is well-nigh incorporeal; its material is transparent. It is sonorous air. It is almost nature herself. It is—free." Two pages further on, I saw without surprise that Busoni himself quoted some verses from "Faust," taken from the episode of Euphorion, whose heavy and useless clothing was found upon the earth after the ascension from which he never returned. There is something of Euphorion in Busoni's art; does he not recall the son of Faust and Helen, himself the product of a southern land and germanic thought?

As long as Busoni applies his art to the interpretation of known works by means of such a familiar instrument as the piano, the contact in which these works and this instrument keep us in touch with reality, reassures us and prevents a fall from vertiginous heights. He even gives us a point of departure to measure these heights whither he leads us, so that, instead of going astray, we are exalted; we follow him in an ecstasy which nothing can disturb, into ethereal regions, yet where we do not altogether lose sight of our earthly dwelling. But when he cuts the rope attached to the balloon, when he leads us without map or itinerary, expecting us to follow the daring flights of his imagination, we are encumbered and embarrassed by our feet of clay; or, on the contrary, perhaps annoyed by being made aware of their weight. For a Maurice Barrès¹, the true beauty of a landscape is to be found in the pure quality of the Italian light rather than in the irregular profiles of the Swiss mountains, which bring the romantic barriers too near our eyes. I believe that Busoni would prefer the immense pile of the Rigi or the Wetterhorn to the landscape of line and fugitive shading formed by clouds on a blue sky. Paradoxical to-day—true tomorrow—who knows? Perhaps in the future, by substituting aerial for funicular communication with inaccessible heights to which an organ point might possibly bear the same relation to the summit, as the Terminal to the Palace, we may modify our esthetics as well as our ideas of touring. Man never becomes used to the inaccessible; he wants it, but is afraid of it; he does not like it until it has ceased to be inaccessible. When the aerial cars appear on the skyline according to schedule time, these unknown countries of the sun and of the sky will alone appeal to our taste or capture our emotions. Music, such as Busoni conceives it, as he realizes it in his playing, as he wishes

¹"Du Sang, de la Volupté, et de la Mort." New Edition, p. 216.

to create it in his works, will correspond to the rapturous flight of those beating wings which we have followed for ten years, gaining each day in breadth and actuality; so it is not without justice that Busoni has observed an analogous process in music, of which he, since 1906,¹ has taken cognizance and in which he may well say he has participated.

In everything, in art as in the rest, the certainties of the future are made from the anxieties of the present. The peculiar quality of genius is to show us new things while we are still struggling with the old problems. Would it astonish us that this uncertainty which expresses itself in musical sounds to-day, should sing of certainties tomorrow? Will the "echo sonore" of which Victor Hugo speaks, no longer sound only in the poet's soul, but in the musician's? Are we not at the beginning of an epoch when the worn muscles, the tired mind of humanity, weary of searching the principles of action in systems, for hope in science, mystery in philosophy, or symbols in poetry will try to free itself even as in dreams? Detached from all materialism and, as Busoni would like, from all form, music, through its spontaneity and its unlimited possibilities, will produce that fusion between impression and expression, music, which puts no limit upon emotion or upon expression, would then be the eloquent and universal voice to express this weariness and these aspirations. Free and varied work, always interesting, though sometimes uncertain like that of Ferruccio Busoni's, a sort of cosmic interpretation following his colossal fantasy at will, has perhaps already done more than realize this prophecy. So I have wished not only to point out a virtuoso without equal, not only a composer of highest originality, but a leader of thought, and, as I have said in the beginning, by the quality of his playing, of his genius, and of his mind, one of the most significant men of a time which has seen a pianist become a prime minister. Then why should we be astonished to find in another pianist a rhapsodist who brings out in turn every daring though often uncertain combination, now verging towards the light, now walking in obscurity, and whose work is forced into being through the suffering of his own epoch, even as the varied notes of a perhaps prophetic melopaeia?

(Translated by Harriet Lanier from the "Revue hebdomadaire," April, 1920.)

¹"Entwurf," etc., p. 39, note.